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Interview with Janet Mills by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Mills, Janet

Interviewer

Nicoll, Don

Date

December 20, 1999

Place

Skowhegan, Maine

ID Number

MOH 164

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Biographical Note

Janet Trafton Mills was born on December 30, 1947 to Katharine and S. Peter Mills II. Her mother was a schoolteacher, and her father served as a U.S. Attorney, appointed by Margaret Chase Smith. Mills graduated from Farmington High School in 1965, and went on to Colby College. She left Colby, and pursued the remainder of her undergraduate education in San Francisco and at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. She also spent time studying at the Sorbonne. She worked in Washington as a legal secretary before enrolling at the University of Maine School of Law in 1973. She graduated in 1976, and went to work in the Maine attorney general's office. In 1980, Governor Joe Brennan appointed Mills to fill the District Attorney of Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford Counties in Maine until 1994, when she sought the Democratic nomination to the United States Congress. She has been active in Democratic politics, and at the time of interview, practiced law with her brother Peter in Skowhegan, Maine.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family background and education; working for the Attorney General's office; enrolling as a Democrat in a Republican family; appointment as District Attorney; George Mitchell as a trial lawyer; Mills family political history; Mills family relationship with Margaret Chase Smith; Peter Mills II campaigns; Colby College; working in

Washington, DC; University of Maine Law School 1973-1976; reasons for becoming a Democrat; 1980 Democratic Convention; excitement over a Muskie nomination; election of 1960 at the Mills home; Peter and Paul Mills; chairing Brennan's 1994 campaign; liberal Republicans in Maine politics; Maine politics changing in the early 1990s; Peter Mills III's political career; George Mitchell; women in Maine politics; and women in Maine law.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is Monday afternoon, the 20th of December, 1999. We are in the law offices of Wright and Mills in Skowhegan, Maine. This is Don Nicoll and I'm interviewing Janet Mills. Janet, would you start us off by giving your full name and your date and place of birth?

Janet Mills: I'm Janet Trafton Mills, T-R-A-F-T-O-N, and date of birth 12/30/47. I'll be fifty-two next week. I was born in Farmington, Maine at the old hospital and, in late 1947, and grew up in Farmington. Except for about nine or ten years when the family, which the family spent in Gorham, Maine in the late '50s, mid '50s and early '60s when my father [S. Peter Mills, II] was the United States attorney and living in, serving in Portland, working in Portland. So, yes, I graduated from Farmington High School in 1965 and went to, started at Colby College in 1965 to 1967, left there of my own accord on in January of 1967. Went to San Francisco for a time, for a time, took some courses out there and worked, came back to New England in the fall of '67 and worked for a year or two there.

And when I went back to school a year later at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, it was then in downtown Boston. I lived in the north end for a year, and I lived on Beacon Hill for a year, and I took courses, what the heck did I do, oh, and then I took a year at University of Massachusetts in Boston. And then I went to the Sorbonne for a year on U Mass' first "year abroad" program and lived in Paris for a year, and came back to get my degree. And got my degree as soon as I got back, in French, with a minor in English from the University of Maine in Boston, University of Massachusetts, Boston, and worked for another couple of years, two, three years as a legal secretary, clerk, da-da-da-da. Worked in Washington for two years and returned to Maine in 1973, fall of '73, to start law school at the University of Maine School of Law. Attended Maine School of Law, Maine Law School '73, '74, '75, graduated in 1976. Served on the *Maine*, board of editors of the *Maine Law Review*, became interested in criminal law during law school, worked as an intern doing trial work in Henry Berry's office in the Cumberland County D.A.'s office in '74, '75, '76, and '75, '76. Worked as an intern in Washington in the summers of '74 and '75, worked with Charles Morgan at the Civil Liberties Union in Washington during Watergate for a bit, and with the National Center for Law and Social Policy under Marcia Greenberger in Washington working on women's issues one summer.

And I graduated from law school in 1976, passed the Bar, and I went to work in the attorney

general's office. Joe Brennan hired me in the attorney general's office in September, 1976. And I was the first woman in the criminal division of the AG's office, began doing legal writing on law enforcement issues and sort of pushed my way into trial work, started trying cases that year and, started trying homicide cases, tax evasion, major fraud cases, and worked there for almost four years. Also, you know, worked on Joe Brennan's campaign in '78, and began writing speeches and the like and doing volunteer work on the campaign. I think I first registered, or enrolled as a Democrat, first enrolled in '73, because I couldn't enroll at age eighteen, it hadn't changed to twenty-one at the time I was eighteen. So I enrolled, when I got back to Maine I enrolled as a Democrat, I never enrolled as a Republican. And I remember standing in line at the Portland High School where the caucus was being held, it must have been '74. And George Mitchell and Joe Brennan were standing behind me and I knew them somewhat, but not real well, and they were laughing about my enrolling as a Democratic, saying, "If your father only knew." And -

DN: Did your father know at that time?

JM: Not at that time, no. I think I told him about the time he was getting divorced from my mother. I figured, make it easier, it would sound pretty slight in the scheme of things, and not as offensive as it otherwise might have sounded. Then, went to work in the AG's office and worked on Brennan's campaign in, well, '78, '77-'78, and he was attorney general at that time. And, let me see, he became governor, sworn in, in January 1979. I stayed on in the AG's office in the criminal division, '79, '80. Then May of 1980, the same week that George Mitchell was appointed to the United States Senate by Joe Brennan, who had formerly been defeated by Mitchell in '74 in the Democratic primary of course, and who had worked for Joe Brennan, Mitchell having worked for Brennan in the Cumberland county district attorney's office years prior to that. When George Mitchell, the week George Mitchell was appointed to the United States Senate by Joe Brennan, Governor Brennan, Tom Delahanty, who had been county attorney in Androscoggin County, well, district attorney for Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties, they were districted in 1974, he had been there for about nine years. Tom Delahanty was appointed by the president, Jimmy Carter, to become U.S. attorney. And he took my father's place as U.S. attorney, essentially because my father had gotten done. Jimmy Carter became president in '76, and there was some lag time, he stayed on for a year or so after that I think, and . . .

DN: This was your father's second round.

JM: My father, yes it was. He served sixteen years, two eight-year, roughly eight-year stints as U.S. attorney, as a Republican presidential nominee, appointment as U.S. attorney thanks to, in great part to Margaret Smith. And, so in May of 1980 George Mitchell had taken my father's place for a short time before he became a federal judge. No one had been officially appointed to take George Mitchell's place. For about a year or so a fellow named Jim Brannigan served as interim U.S. attorney and, he's a Democrat I guess, and Tom Delahanty had been seeking the position for some time. And finally in May he was finally appointed, he didn't require confirmation. So he was appointed U.S. attorney, which left an immediate vacancy in the district attorney's office, which I had been lobbying Governor Brennan for.

And quite a few things happened that week, but among the two important things in my life, or among the important things in my life, was my appointment to the office of district attorney in the Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties, taking the place of the man who actually took my father's place. I took George Mitchell's place, who had taken my father's place in the same week George Mitchell took Muskie's place as senate, in the senate when Muskie became secretary of state under President Carter.

We, a few weeks before that I had tried a case against Senator Mitchell, or, no, excuse me, not weeks, it was, backing up, a year or so before that. Before he became federal judge, it was a couple years before that, before he became federal judge, for the brief time that Senator Mitchell was in private practice, before he became U.S. attorney, excuse me. He was under investigation by the FB-, under review by the FBI for the post of U.S. attorney when Arthur Stilfin and I were trying a homicide case against him. I think it was the last case he tried, and he was an excellent trial lawyer. The case of *State vs. Donald Ruby*, a juvenile, sixteen-year-old, who had killed two people, father and son out in the woods in Gorham, and we had seven days of hearings, bind over hearings and what not. And, so I got to see George in action in trial work before he took my father's place as U.S. attorney and before he became federal judge. And as all things, he excelled and was a perfectionist, although he lost, but, you know, it was a hard case and he did an excellent job.

DN: How, you said he excelled, how did George excel as a trial lawyer?

JM: He was extre--, he was very thorough, covered all the bases, left no stone unturned. Not in a nasty way at all, but I mean, just a very methodical, and appropriately passionate when passion was called for. And you couldn't get anything by him, you couldn't slip up in your own work without George catching it, obviously. And obviously very intelligent and, again, methodical trial work. So, and that was one of the first cases I worked on and so I was very impressed and learned a lot from that. But at the same time, the FBI was hovering outside the door asking questions about this fellow to see if he was an appropriate candidate for my father's position as U.S. attorney. It was kind of amusing. And the person, the lead counsel for the state was Arthur Stilfin, I was working with Arthur, and Arthur, of course, had worked with George as an assistant county attorney when they both worked for Joe Brennan a few years before that. Maine is a small state.

DN: Yes. Your family was obviously prominent in Farmington and Republican politics. Did that go back beyond your father's time?

JM: Oh yes, my grandfather was an active Republican. My brother Paul, or Peter could tell you precise dates, but he served in the Maine legislature. He was actually elected originally from Stonington. The family have roots in almost every corner of Maine. My grandfather, Sumner Peter Mills [I] the first, was originally, he came from a family of stonecutters in, from the granite quarries of Stonington and Deer Isle. And my father thinks back very, very fondly of Deer Isle and, where he visits every few months whenever he can and, even now. But my grandfather was born and raised in Deer Isle. And I guess he couldn't make it as a stonecutter so they sent him to law school. He studied law, where he could become a real chiseler [laughter], no, where he could earn a living, and this was in late 1800s. And he met my grandmother who

was a teacher, she had had a brief stint down the coast and she taught elementary school. And they met and married, but he moved back to her home turf in Farmington.

His parents, his, excuse me, his ancestors, my father's father's ancestors, had come over and settled Stonington years before, come over from Pugwash, Nova Scotia and the Mills clan. And my grandmother, Flora Pearson Mills, her, both sides of her family had settled in Farmington in the early 1700s. Pearsons, Tufts, Ramsdale, all kinds of names there who settled in Farmington, and her lineage was of Revolutionary and, of course, Civil War veterans. And my mother's, and then my So my grandfather, Peter Mills, became a lawyer in Farmington and my grandmother settled down and had three children, including my father and my Uncle Bill, who was a lawyer.

And, my father's oldest brother who was a lawyer and had become, who became a tax lawyer and corporate lawyer and worked for the Dupont family, became the A.I. Dupont family lawyer, and moved to Florida many, many years ago and eventually retired into the law firm of, oh geez, who's the guy that owns the Tampa Bay Buccaneers? It's a southern name. Culpepper! Culpepper, Culpepper something-or-other, something-or-other, Mills Law Firm. And he was also president of the Florida National Bank before he retired. He, so he was a lawyer, my grandfather was a lawyer, my father was a lawyer, my Aunt Virginia was a teacher on that side of the family.

And in my mother's [Katherine Louise Coffin Mills] family, her father and mother lived all their lives in Ashland, Maine. And they shared, my grandfather was town clerk of Ashland for nearly fifty years I believe, and then my grandmother took over after he died. And their roots go way back in the county, they're Coffins, Traftons and Coffins, and most of them are buried in the family cemetery in Ashland. And my mother's, my mother had one brother and one sister as well, and her sister was a teacher and her brother was a lawyer. Her brother Lewis Coffin, also deceased now, was, met my Uncle Bill at Bowdoin, they went to Bowdoin. And they were in the Navy together during World War Two. So that's how my mother and father met, through the two uncles who were lawyers, eventually lawyers. And my Uncle Lewis Coffin was, became head of the Law Library at the Library of Congress and lived in Washington most of his adult career. So, what was the question?

DN: So, the lawyers of the two families came together.

JM: Yes, that's right, lawyers and Navy men. My father was a Navy man too, and was in the Pacific during World War Two in the battle of Leyte Gulf.

DN: When you were growing up, did you hear a lot of talk about the law and politics?

JM: Yes, law and grammar and vocabulary. My mother was an English teacher for many years until she retired, eighty-one or eighty-two, no, eighty, seventy-, well around age eighty. And, yeah, we heard a lot about politics, and Margaret Smith was a close family friend and somewhere I have pictures of her holding me as an infant, and she gave me a savings bond when I was born. And she was very close to the family and, of course, she was very good at constituent work across the area, across the state and always sent us birthday cards and get well

cards, or whatever the occasion called for. And I was familiar with her house in Skowhegan when that was built.

And when Eisenhower came with her to, visited her at her house in Maine and came up to Parmachenee Lake to do some fishing, trout fishing in, was it 1954 I think? I remember the small parade they had through the middle of Farmington, and they made the turn down South Street towards High Street and they stopped right in front of our house. And everybody waved, and I was on the front porch waving. So, political in that sense, yes.

I remember working on Smith's campaigns as a child and going door to door and delivering leaflets and what not, and talking her up even as a kid. And she had quite a network of campaign work-, volunteer campaign workers. Without spending any money or raising any money, of course, sort of word-of-mouth and by letter.

DN: Are you, you were brought up in that environment and obviously had some familiarity with campaigning, particularly through Senator Smith and I presume through your father's campaign.

JM: Yes, he ran, the campaign I remember most was the one when I was in high school in [19]'64. He ran for the state senate and the big race was the primary we thought. And he beat, I believe, Joe Holman in that primary. And that was the big upset, and we thought then he was a shoo-in. We didn't realize the havoc that would be wreaked by the spin-off from the Goldwater campaign the year Goldwater was beaten by Lyndon Johnson. And I was a junior in high school, '64, yes, a junior in high school and, of course, I worked on my father's campaign and went to a lot of bean suppers and casserole suppers. And, but we were quite shocked that he, when he lost in the general election by eighty-three votes to Sid Maxwell, who ran a bar in North Jay, who had not campaigned at all to speak of. But it was a year for big upsets for the Republicans and, you know, you learn that you couldn't take anything for granted in politics.

DN: Now, as late as '64 you were active in your father's campaign, and yet your time in college, you did not aim for the law, you aimed ultimately -

JM: No, I didn't aim in college.

DN: You didn't?

JM: There were no aims. No.

DN: But you left Colby after a couple of years.

JM: About a year and a half, yeah. Too close to home. Both my parents had gone to Colby, '34 and '39, and it was only thirty-eight miles from my house and they kept showing up. You know, if I'd go to a fraternity party after the football game and try to have fun, my father would be at this, he was an ATO, I'd be at an ATO party and my father and mother would walk in the door. You can't have fun as a college kid when your parents are right behind you. And I was young, I didn't take it terribly seriously. So I left and I'm glad I did because it matur-, I matured

by working for a couple years and getting other life experiences. And when I went back to school at the University of Massachusetts I got, I think I got a 4.0 the first semester. I took it seriously and I worked hard and I enjoyed it more. So, and then I went to Paris and I enjoyed that, too, did well.

DN: Now, you said you worked in Washington?

JM: Yeah, I worked a year in Cambridge, Mass. after I got back from Paris. And then I worked two years in Washington; I lived in Virginia. I lived in Georgetown for a year and I commuted by bicycle to a law firm in downtown Washington, just the other side of the White House, K Street I think, and, G Street, and did patents, trademarks and copyrights. And [I] translated patents from French to English and English to French. I started out as a receptionist (I just wanted a job) and within a couple months they promoted me to secretary. And then a few months later they discovered I could write and speak French, and so they promoted me to be their first paralegal. And so I stayed on there as a paralegal until I went to law school in '73.

DN: Was it the experience working in that law firm that led you to pursue the practice of law?

JM: In good part. My father had encouraged me to go to law school a few years before and I pooh-poohed the idea, didn't see myself as a lawyer. And I had this boyfriend and he was moving to Washington and, you know. On such small things, life turns, but, and then I broke up with him and wanted to come back to Maine. And I saw all these guys, they were all guys, lawyers, making money, and I was doing all the work and I thought, gee, that doesn't seem right. I could do that, and I could have the title too.

DN: Now, is Peter older or younger than you?

JM: Peter is four-and-a-half years older than I am, and David, I have a brother David, is two years, a year-and-a-half, two years older than I am, and my brother Paul is five years younger, and Dora is our baby sister. Dora's about twelve years younger than me, and so seventeen years younger than Peter.

DN: And Peter, was Peter already practicing law when you went to law school?

JM: Peter graduated the year I started. And his then wife, Meg, Margaret Johns-, Margaret Walton John-, Margaret Walton Thompson, she was a Leavitt, Margaret Walton Thompson Mills was two years ahead of me in law school. They had three small children, two small children then, and Meg and Peter were both in law school at the same time, a year apart. He graduated, he was on the *Law Review* and top in his class, and the next year she was on the *Law Review* and tops in her class, with John McKernan. She went to school with Jock McKernan, same year, so Jock was two years ahead of me. Phil Merrill was a year ahead of me, Joe Jabar was a year ahead of me, I think, and Jim Tierney was in the same grouping. And these guys were always taking a semester off to run for office and stuff, which I thought was kind of a slipshod way of getting through law school, but. I didn't do that.

DN: When you got to law school, you went right through.

JM: Yes, I did, yes. David Flanagan was around then too, I had met David in Europe, same year [Bill] Clinton was in Europe. And, David was kind of a rad-, kind of left wing then. Maybe he still is. So, there were a lot of people in law school running for office off and on. Oh, who's the guy that was in, from, Steve Hughes from Auburn, he was in the state legislature. He was in law school then, although he never took the Bar. A lot of politicians then. Jab-, let me think about Jabar, I'm not positive about Jabar being there, I don't think he was. Merrill, Tierney, McKernan, Steve Hughes. Jabar and I were in college together, a year apart, at Colby.

But anyway, so Meg was a year behind Peter and two years ahead of me. And then my brother Paul, because I had taken time off, Paul went directly from Harvard College to Maine Law School, he was a year behind me. My sister-in-law's brother-in-law, Larry Zuckerman, was in the, a year ahead of me, and her cousin, Babe Boynton, was a year ahead of me. We thought of starting a law firm when we all got out and we'd call it Mills, Mills, Mills, Mills, Boynton & Zuckerman, we'd cover all the bases.

DN: Now you, you decided after law school to become a Democrat.

JM: During law school actually,-

DN: During law school, that's right, yes, '73.

JM: - during law school, I'm not sure which campaign it was. I became involved in women's issues, so-called "women's issues", when I was still in Washington. And then when I was in law school I helped develop the curriculum and put together the first course on women's --, "Discrimination and the Law" it was called, a seminar. And there was only one woman teacher there then, too. And we were the first class to have any substantial numbers of women in the class, we had about a third. And before there had just been a piddling number of women each class, in each class. And so we kind of took over the school.

I'm trying to, well, the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment] was an issue then, so I was involved in that. And, well whose campaign? Seventy-four, I didn't get involved in Brennan's campaign in '74 but I remember being at the cau--, I went to the caucuses and stuff during that campaign. I didn't have time to get truly involved, but that's when I enrolled.

I did, actually I got involved in politics a little bit in Washington, I worked a bit on Cliff Alexander's campaign for mayor of Washington. Cliff Al-, he was a hot ticket, I mean, I think he was secretary of Navy after that for a while, under Carter maybe? One or the other. And, he's a very bright guy. I saw him on TV recently and, you know, he didn't look like he changed at all, but I just haven't fol---. I guess he's a lawyer in some big law firm in Washington. Anyway, so, but I don't think I enrolled, I didn't enroll in the party in Washington. I don't know why, but -

DN: When did you decide that you were a Democrat? Was it before you enrolled?

JM: Yeah, well yeah, I think I made that choice. It became a natural inclination after the

experiences of the '60s and the issues that I was involved with were more the Democratic issues than Republican issues.

DN: You've mentioned women, civil rights, were there other issues that excited you then?

JM: Oh, well yeah, a few years before that I'd been, the drinking age and the voting age were big issues, "big issues", quote, unquote. We weren't too concerned about taxes and budgets and stuff.

DN: Were you at all involved in the opposition to the Vietnam War?

JM: Yeah, well involved, not, you know, I wasn't an office holder in any revolutionary organizations or SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] or anything like that, but I marched a few times in San Francisco. And, see Colb-, we didn't have any of that stuff at Colby when I was there. And when I started college it wasn't, it wasn't a very involved student body, anywhere really, but in '65, '66 it was still early. The only demonstration I remember at Colby was when Everett Dirksen was proposing the marigold as the national flower and Senator Smith had proposed the rose. And I think we had a straw poll at Colby and I demonstrated for the rose.

DN: Now, you had grown up knowing Senator Smith and, she paying quite a bit of attention to your family, but when it came to political choice, you didn't identify with her.

JM: Well, I remember visiting with her and doing stuff in her office a little bit here and there in '72 when I was still in Washington, but to say I was really involved wouldn't be accurate. And, no, I didn't get involved in the Hathaway campaign at all; I wasn't part of that. And I wouldn't have done anything against her to hurt her at all, and didn't get in-, just wasn't terribly involved in that campaign. And, no, the only campaign, the first campaigns I really got involved in as an adult were, I think, Joe Brennan's campaigns, and then not until '78, '77 really, '76, '77 he was getting ready, and '77 he was campaigning, '78.

DN: Now during this entire period when first your family, Senator Smith and the Brennan and Mitchell campaigns, etcetera, were you at all attracted to or repelled by Senator Muskie?

JM: Oh, never repelled by him, my goodness, no. I'm trying to think when my first encounters with him would have been, it would have been during '77, '78 period, and in 1980. And I was a delegate to the 1980 Democratic National Convention, and I know there are different versions of this story, but I was a [Ted] Kennedy delegate. And Severin Beliveau and Harold Pachios were there as, well Severin was at least a Carter delegate, and John Martin and Chick O'Leary. And Joe Brennan was a Kennedy delegate, and we had a pretty substantial delegation for Kennedy. But during the course of the convention itself, there was a bit of a rumor afoot that Senator Muskie might, *might*, accept the nomination if he were, or allow his name to be placed in nomination to be voted on. Well, that excited all of us, and we began having visits from, who's Carter's lawyer, I can picture him?

Well anyway, we began having visits from some of the honchos from the Carter administration, who kept telling us Senator Muskie does not want to run for president. And we all laughed, and

said, "You can't tell us that. If that word is going to come from anybody . . . A And they kept, they'd say, "Well, President Carter will tell you that." And we laughed again. We don't want to hear it from President Carter, we're going to put, we're going to start this ball rolling, and we would like to put Senator Muskie (this was both sides, both camps), we'd love to put Senator Muskie's name in nomination, he'd be a great president. Scared the shit out of the Carter folks.

And eventually, nobody could find Senator Muskie to get an answer, and I don't recall where he was, but ultimately (unintelligible word) Carter or one of the Carter people, who was the other guy, the blonde guy, got him on the phone. And they took Severin and Harold out to the trailer in the back of the convention hall and said, "Senator Muskie wants to tell you that he doesn't want to run for president."

We were all very excited, I mean this was a tremendous thing to put, we really wanted to put his name in nomination and go for it. And we had commitments from other, we'd gone around to other states and said, "What would happen if . . . ?" And they'd say, "Wow, yeah, that sounds great, that's a good alternative," yip-yip-yip. Because people didn't think Jimmy Carter could win. Nobody disliked him but, I mean, but at the same time Kennedy was weak in certain areas, and too liberal, blah-blah, so Muskie seemed like a real logical alternative.

And somebody found him though. And one of the Carter honchos placed the phone in Severin and Harold's hands to kind of tease him into saying, no, he didn't want his name placed in nomination. Very reluctantly, I'm sure, because given his history of running. And so I suppose that's the first issue I became involved in -

DN: With him.

JM: - with respect to Muskie.

DN: In, in 195-

JM: Oh, I was good friends, or I became good friends with Barbara Alexander and Don Alexander, because I went to law school with Barbara, she was a classmate. And of course I read the book, The Senate Nobody Knows, later on. And Don and Barbara, you know, we'd talk about Muskie quite a bit. Don, I forget how long he worked for him, but. And I got to know Gayle Cory and Leon Billings and people like that from visiting Washington, being in Washington off and on, and through mutual friends like Don and Barbara.

DN: This is while, this would have been while he was still in the senate.

JM: Yeah, exactly, yeah. And then in 1980, I didn't have any, I didn't really have anything to do with him except, you know, from his speeches to the lobster feeds and the conventions, the state conventions and the fund raisers and all those kinds of things that we always had. We had par-, you know, some fund raisers at his home, and he was always warm and gentlemanly and, you know, it was a wonderful history to hear from him. When you heard his speeches, you just always heard a lot of history and great anecdotes and that was inspiring.

DN: Did you, were you aware of the election of '54, you were only seven years old?

JM: Not really, not really. But Peter and Paul could tell you about the family's history with Fred Payne and other such folks, too, who stayed in Farmington occasionally. And, now, '54, let me think, that was the, let's see, '52, Eisenhower was elected in '52. And so my father, we moved to Farmington, I mean Portland, Gorham, Gorham, when I was about five. I wasn't really aware of that election, '54.

DN: Do you re-

JM: Not until '6-, I remember the 1960 election vividly -

DN: Nineteen sixty election.

JM: Yeah.

DN: Was that election one of great concern to your parents?

JM: Sure, yeah. And I didn't know, I didn't know any different except that if the Republican lost then my father would be out of a job. It wasn't, it wasn't a position you took on the merits, it was a position based on family realities, political realities.

DN: Do you recall any conversations about Muskie as governor and then Muskie as senator, and that '58 campaign with Fred Payne?

JM: Only that the family supported Fred Payne. Yeah, and I don't remember, but I don't remember any negative being, anything negative being said about Muskie, either. It was simply a tradition to be Republican and it was just different than being a Democrat. It wasn't really based on the issues, because I mean I don't remember what the issues were in '58.

DN: What were your, do you recall anything about your father and mother and this question of the Republicans and the Democrats and the differences?

JM: Well there weren't many Democrats in Franklin county growing up. I don't, you know, I'm trying to think who the Democrats were. I mean, you didn't go around wearing those labels upon the street, but, you know, outside of Lewiston you didn't hear about any Democrats existing.

DN: So, -

JM: Maine was a Republican state, and Franklin county along with it. The Democrats just didn't run for office, didn't win office, they barely existed in your consciousness.

DN: So your first real awareness of there being some Democrats in Franklin County came in that '64 campaign?

JM: Sixty-four, yeah, oh my God, Jay reared its head. And I remember the '60 election, I remember Ronald Reagan's speech about Goldwater, I don't mean Goldwater, Nixon, he gave a speech about Nixon, and everybody thought that was going to be a real turnaround. But in terms of local impact, I'm trying to remember who else ran in 1960, who else in Maine ran for things in 1960.

DN: That was the year of the Frank Coffin run for governor.

JM: Yes, wow. Sixty?

DN: Nineteen sixty.

JM: Oh my goodness. I remember nice things being said about John Reed, and my mother's from the county so she felt close to Reed. And, what other Republicans were there they hung around with? Yeah, but the biggest, the biggest incursion of Democrats in political life and in our lives was in '64.

DN: And you, my impression from what you've said is that your move to become a Democrat really was a response to a set of issues?

JM: Yeah, more than a particular person. Although I think Brennan and Mitchell, I had sort of watched their careers for the short time I'd been back in Maine at that point. And Muskie certainly, I mean, I had become fully aware of Muskie by that time and it was an influence. Just the policies and politics, and the Vietnam War. And as you know, Senator Smith lost points on the Vietnam War, I think, and, in a lot of people's minds. And I think she, it was an issue in the Hathaway election and she didn't seem to understand what was going on and be aware of the Cambodia issue and stuff. And so, well I didn't, wasn't involved in that campaign, but it sort of reflected on Republicans generally, I think.

DN: Your family was clearly Republican. How did they react when you became a Democrat?

JM: No worse than they reacted when I dropped out of Colby College, their alma mater, and left town, you know, for San Francisco. That was, after that nothing could shock them. I think they were glad I wasn't something else, something lower than a Democrat.

DN: What, was Republicanism a passion for them, or?

JM: No, it was a habit, not a passion, a habit, a tradition. And I think my father, if he had been born at a later time, he might have been a Democrat, or at least he would have had the opportunity to choose, and I don't think he had that opportunity. He had no choice. He was born and raised a Republican, it was what you did. Maine didn't have a two-party system. Well, I mean Pattengall was both parties, we had other part-, we had other prominent Democrats in the course of history, but it just wasn't tradition in Franklin county, for instance, or areas where my family resided.

DN: And your grandfather Mills was a -

JM: Republican.

DN: Republican, and he had been a -

JM: He was in the legislature and, from Stonington, oh gosh, I want to say, when was the last, I think he last served in 1902. They were married around 1898. My brother Peter would probably have a, remember better, and Paul would know because he's got a photographic memory. But, you know, late 1800s they were married and early 1900s they moved back, moved to Farmington, moved back to Farmington. But he served in Stonington, I think 1902 was the last year.

DN: Was this before he studied law?

JM: It was around the same time. You know, at, for many years

DN: Practiced as a lawyer?

JM: Yeah, well, for many, you did. And for many years going to the legislature was part of your routine in developing a law practice. Now it's the opposite, you're conflicted out of a lot of things. But for many years people went to the legislature so that they could become lobbyists, and that's what a lot of young lawyers did, become lobbyists, to earn a living. And now that's, well, frowned upon somewhat. But, or you ran for county attorney or something, or municipal court judge, even if you were fresh in the practice, those were the kinds of jobs you got. Or you sold insurance. I think my grandfather made more money selling insurance the early years of his practice than he did doing deeds, wills and litigation.

DN: You and your brother both have been trial lawyers

JM: Yes. My brother Peter. Paul does more real estate, commercial and collections, and he's really good at what he does, it's a different kind of practice.

DN: And for a while -

JM: Paul, but Paul was the, Paul was the person in the family that we all assumed would run for office. He was more politically cognizant than all the rest of us put together. And I couldn't believe when he got out of law school he didn't immediately run for state senate, but I think, but what happened was, and he was a Republican, was and is, that year, it would have been '77, '78 would have been the election I think, and Andrew Redman was in the state senate for that then configured district, and Andrew was thinking of not running and he said so. Paul took out papers and started circulating, he was ready to file papers, as I recollect it, and then Andrew got back in and ran for reelection. So Paul just backed out and didn't test the waters again.

DN: The moment passed.

JM: Yeah, right. It's too bad, he would have made an excellent legislator or, he loves public

policy, he loves history, he's fanatical about Maine history and political history and politics, knows, Chris Potholm's book that he wrote last year, he sent to Paul to edit and Paul: *(laughter)* "this is wrong, this isn't right." He had to redo substantial portions of it, I think. And, because he just remembered things that were wrong, dates and

DN: Did Paul follow the family tradition and go to Bowdoin?

JM: No, Paul went to Harvard, and Peter went to Harvard. And, well, just started a new tradition. Dora went to Bowdoin. And I started at Colby, didn't finish, and my brother David didn't go to college. Paul went right through Harvard College, and then Maine Law School, and then went right in with my father in the Mills & Mills firm in Farmington. And he's been there ever since.

DN: And you and Peter settled in, ultimately in Skowhegan.

JM: Ultimately, yes. I held the office of district attorney in May of 1980 to the end of 1994. And '94, I had gotten married in '85 to a widower who had five daughters and helped bring them up, and in '94 I was kind of tired of being DA. And I ran for congress in the primary when Mitchell, again, threw a screw in the works by retiring from the U.S. Senate, and in, what, March of that year, and then a bunch of us jumped in the race. So I ran for the U.S. Congress in spring of 1994, blessedly short campaign, and was beat by [John E.] Baldacci in that primary.

And then I co-chaired Joe Brennan's campaign for governor, right, not senator, governor, wait a minute, '94, yes, governor, and that was unsuccessful. I co-chaired it with Tom Allen and Bonnie Titcomb. And then I ran for attorney general in December. I came very close as an outsider, not holding a legislative office, came very close but was beaten by [Andrew] Drew Ketterer. So that was a lousy year, sort of a reverse hat trick.

DN: And

JM: And so then my brother Peter for the first time was running for political office, he was fiftyish and . . .

End of Side A
Side B

DN: This is the second side of the December 20th, 1999 interview with Janet Mills, and we were just talking about Peter Mills and his election to the senate.

JM: Yes, Peter, my brother Peter, the third, Sumner Peter Mills, III, had gone into the firm of Harry Richardson. Richardson, Tyler, Hildreth, etcetera, whatever that was called then, which had a lot, some prominent liberal Republicans in it in Portland in 1973. He, he was very much influenced by Harry Richardson. And when Harry ran for governor in '74, he worked on his campaign. And Peter became elected, got elected to the state Republican committee and what not, and became active in Cumberland county politics primarily on Harry's behalf and, of course, worked with [Horace] Hoddy Hildreth [Jr.] as well.

So in 19-, then he came to Skowhegan to practice some years after that, and went in with Carl Wright. In 1994, Peter had decided to run for the state senate, had kind of token opposition that year, and won election fairly handily in the fall. At the same time I was busy trying to help Joe Brennan get elected and help myself get elected AG, you know, and what not, and try to get elected to the Congress, and all sorts of things that year. It was a busy but confusing year. And so after I was getting done as DA at the end of '94, Peter was elected to the, had been elected to the senate and one of his associates was a lobbyist so he had to get done at the firm because he couldn't lobby when Peter was in the senate, so Peter needed somebody to come here and he approached me to go into practice with him, so it kind of worked out. He was a moderate liberal Dem-, Republican going into politics for the first time, and I was a moderate liberal Democrat coming out of politics and into trial work. And so we crossed paths and combined resources to go into practice together, where I've been ever since. And instead of prosecuting I'm defending, and doing civil trials and divorces and bread and butter stuff.

DN: Are you still engaged in public policy work?

JM: Yes, well, to the extent I'm on the, Drew Ketterer, who beat me as attorney, for attorney general, appointed me to the Criminal Law Advisory Commission, for instance. And we meet once a month and we have the right to introduce our own legislation, so it's a fairly important committee. I'm on the board of the Maine Women's Lobby, which I helped start in 1978. I was one of the four or five founding members of the Maine Women's Lobby. Because, I was involved in politics in the attorney general's office, too, before I became DA.

I worked on other campaigns during those years, too. And then as district attorney I helped Paul Zendzian when he ran for congress in the primary, he got beat by Dunleavy, '82 I think. I worked on George Mitchell's campaigns. Mary McAleney used to stay at my apartment, and we'd canvas and caboot and schmooz together, and work Lewiston over as much as we could. And I worked on, oh, sometimes Georgette Berube's and Connie Cote's campaigns and different people in Lewiston-Auburn. And, what was the question?

DN: About your involvement in politics and public policy.

JM: Oh, now, yes.

DN: Now.

JM: And I worked on some campaigns in the last four years. I worked very hard for my good friend Chris Krauss when she ran for the state senate in Franklin county two years ago, a year and a ha--, it was a year ago. And I worked on other legislative campaigns. And I'm on the board of directors of Maine Trial Lawyers Association; I'm on the board of directors of the Maine Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. And I'm vice president, or president-elect now, and I'm on the board of the Margaret Chase Smith Library, the Northwoods Institute Library, as you are. Aren't you on that?

DN: No, I'm on the Policy Review Editorial Board.

JM: That's even better. And I'm Franklin County Democratic Committee chair, by default. No one else, no one really vies for that position for some reason. And, oh, I've worked on various friends' legislative campaigns.

DN: As you look back on politics as you've known it from childhood, how would you characterize the changes in politics over the years in Maine?

JM: In Maine? Not nearly as dramatic as the changes in Washington in terms of the atmosphere and environment. You know, we did this TV show last week, taped a TV show last weekend, two, MPBN and MPBC. One was the end of the year wrap-up and we were talking about people who had passed on, who had died this year. And I couldn't think of too many that would, the public would remember. But I remembered three people in particular who impressed me as having something in common, those being Dave Roberts, a law court judge, a superior judge and formerly an active Democrat and congressional candidate, and Gerry Campbell, who just died last week who was former president of the senate, Republican, and Dana Childs, who as you know was former Republican floor leader and former Democratic speaker of the house. And those three people had died in the last eight months, nine months, in 1999.

And to me they reflect the, an era of great civility, compassion and aggressive, compassionate and aggressive politics, but a handshake meant a handshake, it meant a deal, and a promise was a promise. And I, to some extent we've seen a change in that code in the Maine legislature, to a greater extent you've seen it in the congress of the United States, the degree of incivility. Of course, there were periods under other presidents years and years ago where there was a great deal of hostility and incivility too. But I think this is a change for the worse in Washington, the degree of antagonism and bitter, virtually name calling at times that does not need to go in politics, shouldn't go on in politics, and shouldn't go on in Maine politics, either.

We saw that happen to some extent in the early 1990s when the budget crisis sort of took over, took hold of state government. And, when McKernan was governor there were allegations of lying back and forth. And the campaign between Brennan and McKernan in 1994, '92, gosh, 1990, duh, 1990, was particularly hostile. There have been dirty tricks, and I'm sure there were many dirty tricks that I never heard about that haven't been uncovered. But Maine politics isn't nearly, isn't nearly stooped to the level of national politics, stooped to the level of uncivility, incivility that national politics has stooped to, but we saw some slippage. And party lines were drawn more distinctly than ever before, I think during those budget crisis years. And the John Martin episode, Ken Allen's arrest and conviction were really volatile times.

And, but the two-party system in Maine, obviously we've seen, and my career doesn't go back that long, that far. But Jim Longley, Jr. was a year behind me in law school, he was in my brother Paul's class. And I recall that election very vividly, the 1974 election, feeling somewhat sorry for young Jim, and being a friend now of Susan's. There's another interesting family. And just the shock that, of Jim Longley's election was, it just sent shock waves, the election sent shock waves through the two-party system in Maine, obviously. And while Angus King is an entirely different kind of governor, the fact that an Independent, that Independents could be elected twice in twenty-five years, three times if you include Angus' reelection, is a pretty

revolutionary thing in Maine politics, and probably national politics. But I see Angus King as much more of a person who came from party roots than was Longley. Those changes, the rise of independents, not as a party but as independents, and the change in atmosphere in the Maine legislature, particularly in the early '90s. And then the bitterness over the McKernan-Brennan election during that whole budget crisis just exacerbated things, the political bitterness and the budgetary, budget competition, budget debates. That was a very hostile time period for Maine politics. Not as hostile as when the KKK was marching in the streets and [Ralph Owen] Brewster was running for governor, but you know, nevertheless, hostile for my time.

DN: You were in law school with a number of individuals who became active in politics in both parties. Have you maintained close relationships with many of your classmates, well contemporaries, not just classmates?

JM: Not real close relationships, but our paths continue to cross. Of course, you know Phil Merrill ran against Joe Brennan in the primary of 1978 and I worked on Brennan's campaign. And Jim Tierney was attorney general while I was DA, much of that time we worked together on a lot of issues. We reformed the bail code together, we worked on legislation and public policy initiatives. McKernan, I didn't, he was a couple years a head of me in law school, and of course we were never on the same team, so we haven't remained, we haven't ever been close, haven't really worked together on things.

You know, I, obviously I forgot to mention the influence of Watergate, politically. You know, the two things in the '60s and '70s, two major influences I think on politics in Maine as elsewhere were the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal in 197-, well, '72 to '74, whatever. In fact, I was in Washington, D.C., I was outside the White House, I was in law school and I was working down there, I was outside the White House the night Nixon resigned and I have pictures of it. It was just an incredible evening, the vibrations in the air, the most bizarre groups of people gathering, they didn't know why, some of them. But there were women with candles holding a vigil, sort of mourning the president, and there were young radicals and older people, people who just, and tourists, and people who just had to be there because it was a historical event, you know, and there were people of all different persuasions. It was like an eclipse, had the same aura of an eclipse, political eclipse.

And so that, the, Watergate, I remember in law school we focused so much on 'what's this going to do the legal profession', because so many lawyers were involved in such evil ways. And the law schools I think, nationwide, felt that they had to start concentrating on ethics and talk about ethics and test on ethics and what not. I don't think you can necessarily teach ethics, you can discuss it, but if it isn't there to begin with I'm not sure how you're going to teach it to people who don't believe in it. But Watergate was certainly an influence politically and, you know, it was the same year I enrolled as a Democrat. That's probably one of the reasons, come to think of it.

DN: Were you very conscious of the Muskie campaigns in '68 and '72, '70 running up to '72?

JM: The presidential?

DN: The vice presidential run in '68 and then the running up to '72.

JM: Sixty-eight less so than '72. Seventy-two I worked in a conservative law office in Washington and I was very supportive of the Democratic team, ticket. I think I was the only one in the office, these were very conservative Republican patent lawyers, and I'd run around. I remember when, I think one of the secretaries went to the Republican convention, she was one of those paid yahoos to wave the flag and, it was in Florida I think. And she came back, I was just disgusted and we had a lot of debates in the office. And, and, I'm trying to remember, I did some stuff politically that year but I can't remember exactly what, even though I wasn't enrolled as such, I was very much on the Democratic team. And, but I don't think I had any personal contact with Muskie during those years, being out of the state.

DN: Did you ever have any contacts with Ken Curtis?

JM: Well, as governor I'm sure I did, but I wasn't involved, I was too young to be involved politically really.

DN: And Judge Coffin?

JM: Yeah, boy, what a neat human being. I knew him more as a judge because he's been on the bench for thirty five years?

DN: Yup.

JM: There was an anniversary, I went to the Ruth Bader Ginsburg speech and I saw him there. And Paul, my brother Paul, had just done this with him. Paul taped about two hours worth of interviews with Coffin, and he's doing a two part series with the *Lewiston Sun*, Sunday paper, the first of which appeared a couple weeks ago. I don't know if you saw it.

DN: No, I haven't seen it.

JM: Oh, it's a nice piece, I've got to say, it's a nice piece. Paul loves doing interviews, he's a natural born newsperson, and he was delighted to have spent an afternoon with Frank Coffin in his chambers in Portland. So I think, and I think it's been thirty f-, I think it was his thirty-fifth anniversary on the bench the night of the Ruth Bader Ginsburg speech. So, no, I didn't know him politically, I was too young. And my parents supported the Republican, what can I say. Every time, whoever it was that ran each time.

DN: As you think back of, about your own political career, which we trust is not over.

JM: Yeah, I feel like an old lady thinking back, God.

DN: But in the first part of your political career -

JM: Yeah, that's right, first fifty years.

DN: - what for you have been the most important incentives for getting involved and staying involved?

JM: I think it's more the candidate than the party. The campaigns I worked on for George Mitchell and Joe Brennan and, oh, for instance, Paul Zendzian when he was mayor of Bangor and ran for congress. And now I'm working on the Bradley campaign, I'm part of team Bradley in Maine. Harold Pachios and Alan Caron and Tom Tureen and Chris Hall and I, it's kind of an oddball group. And I was up in Bangor Saturday with Ernestine Schlant-Bradley and we had some receptions for her and stuff, and it was wonderful. And everybody was so excited and, it wasn't like a campaign that's being imposed from the top down, it's one of these real 'I want to be there' campaigns.

And Harold and I were talking on the sidewalk as we were parting company late in the day, and he was just bubbling. And I said, "Isn't this great?" And he said, "Isn't it great? What is it that's great about it?" And I said, "It makes us feel young again." And, because we working for somebody, it could be Bradley this year, it could have been Mitchell ten years ago or somebody else, you know, but it's just invigorating. And you know at the outset that it means long hours and painful editing and telephoning and fund raising and stuff that goes along with a campaign, but when it's somebody that you really like, it's the person, not the party. Although, I've always campaigned for Democrats.

If my brother Peter, my brother Peter will be running again next year. And he'll be running against a friend of mine, an active Democrat, but I'll support Peter obviously, and do what I can to see that he's reelected to the senate for his last term, he'll be term limited. And then whatever he wants to do after that, if he wants to run for something else, I'll help him. I think he's got the wherewithal, the mettle and the intelligence to run for higher office if he wants to. But it's the person, and, that energizes a campaign.

You know, I've been on the fringes and edges of campaigns that were Democratic campaigns for someone running for election or reelection. And if you didn't have that vitality it was just sort of routine, or the person didn't have a chance in hell, or wasn't a great candidate, and those campaigns are dull. But the campaigns for people who have some smarts and some energy and some interesting ideas, you just feel like you're going to learn something, you know, maybe you'll learn something, there'll be some spin off off the candidate. And, though people get involved in campaigns because they want a job, there are people who get involved in campaigns because they want power. I get involved in campaigns because I love making public policy and I love the debate and Usually there don't seem to be too many issues separating the candidates at the outset. They're always are issues that come up and things that come that are just fun to work on. And framing a person's positions and brainstorming over policy and campaign tactics relating to the policies, it's just a fun. There's nothing like it in American culture, other than campaigns.

I got to see in, I can't remember what year it was, in the early 80s, I went to Germany with the American Council of Young Political Leaders on one of those junkets, frankly. Severin Beliveau and Spencer Oliver started that group years ago, you know. And it's partly sponsored by the State Department so that young (the definition of young changes as Severin grows older), but

young political leaders can go associate with like folk from other countries and other states and monitor elections in other countries.

So I did that, I went to Germany. I went to Munich right during *Oktoberfest*, to monitor the elections there. And, I can't, Helmut Kohl, no, it wasn't Kohl, it was before, I forget who it was that was running. But anyway, the method of campaigning and the elections and, were so different. And the elections I got to witness in France the year I was there, and the politics there are so different than what we do in America and the grass roots things we do here. You don't have the Communist influence that they have in Europe, but, and you don't have the mass, usually you don't have the mass speeches, the huge crowd like something out of a Sergei Eisenstein movie. You have those in Germany and France and Italy and European countries, and, where they have elections. And mass gatherings and mass audiences, and the speech making is different than the speech making we have here that's addressed to the media. And the television speech making is quite different than the 'in person' appeal that they have to make there. And the fund raising is different. But I just find it a unique adventure every time.

And I don't get involved in every campaign, every time there's a Democrat running for office or every time there's a gubernatorial race or a senatorial race, I don't get involved, it's not a knee jerk thing. I try to pick and choose. Takes too much energy out of you, too. I mean, there's a sacrifice to the family when you're running, or when you're helping somebody else run.

DN: How much of your passion for politics stems from your family, and how much from your experiences in the '60s and '70s?

JM: Probably equally, both. Equally. And, although I hated beans, still hate beans, bean suppers are a unique adventure, too. And I remember from an early age being taken to bean suppers. And that was what I knew about campaigning for a long, long time; going to bean suppers and shaking hands with elderly women and ministers and dog catchers and local public office holders, and listening to dad and mom talk over local politics. For some reason that didn't turn me off. But you, it takes a long time to see the connection between what happened in Washington during Vietnam and during Watergate, and what happens at the bean suppers. There is a connection.

And watching the Mitchell campaign, for instance, and to some extent Muskie too before, although I wasn't as aware of things then, watching the Mitchell campaign one-on-one and projecting the same way in his televised speeches. And I remember him coming to Lewiston, Lewiston, the hot bed of somewhat Catholic conservatism, Democratic conservatism, meeting with groups of people at City Hall to discuss abortion. Talk about a lightning rod, and he handled them with such finesse and intelligent argument on an emotional issue like that. That's a difficult thing to do. And you see somebody like that in action, dealing with volatile issues in a rational way, not the way many candidates do now by invoking the name of God and Jesus Christ at every political debate, or waving red flags, but in dealing with it as a person to person: "this is an issue we've got to deal with, and this is my pos-, and I respect your position but this is my position." Civility is not dead.

And, I think that Watergate turned off a lot of people from politics, but to some extent it

energized the Democrats. I think I was part of the generation that was energized by it and not turned off. My degree of cynicism is very high, however, and partly because of that, I imagine.

And, my family always looked on politics as a clean calling. There was never a disparaging word said about the other can-, that I recall, said about the other candidate, the candidate whom they did not support. There were no put downs, there was, nobody ever said, "He's a bum" or "She's a bum." You were loyal to certain people, you were loyal to Margaret Chase Smith for family reasons and political reasons, and because she was a good human being. And they were loyal, similarly loyal to other Republicans who ran for office. But it was always a positive thing and not a negative thing.

Even when, even after '64 when my father got beat by the, by Sid Maxwell in an upset election, he came back and ran again two years later, '64, '65, '66, yes, and was elected to the senate where he served and he, you know, kicked butt. And he served with people of distinction, like, he served on the judiciary committee with, and he had served in the '40s, too. He'd been in the legislature before, but he served in the senate in the '60s with Joe Brennan, Nick Danton, John Lund, Lund? And, I think Lund was attorney general part of that time. And he served with, well Harry Richardson was in the senate, state senate. Democrats and Republicans, liberal, there were moderate and liberal Republicans during that time, as many as there were liberal Democrats, and there were a lot of conservative Democrats too. So the party lines were very indistinct and, to some extent, continue to be so.

DN: Ken Curtis was governor then.

JM: Yeah, yeah, that's right. My father was known as a maverick and he often crossed party lines on critical issues. He put in a legislation, or he was involved, he put in a legislation to oust the small loan companies, kick them out of the state of Maine, doing away with usury, capping the usury rates. And putting, supporting putting legislation on discrimination by private clubs, such as the Elks Club, the case that went to the Supreme Court of the United States, and private country clubs so that they wouldn't be able to say "No Jews allowed," for instance, "No Blacks allowed," etcetera.

And when he was U.S. attorney, of course he was in charge of federal mortgages and foreclosure actions and what not. And there was a piece of property came up on Prout's Neck, I remember. He used to tell the story. Some piece of property came up for federal sale on Prout's Neck. Some Wasp had turned it over. So he was to put it up for sale. And one of the, and I forget who, but one of the old Wasp attorneys came to him and sort of tried to put a bug in his ear saying, "You know, Peter, we don't want this to be a public auction, because some Jew might buy it, you know. We can't have that on Prout's Neck." My father was livid, and he started calling all the Jewish lawyers he knew and saying, "You guys got to put in bids on this property," and stirred up a hornet's nest.

And he, you know, likewise he took on, the Belfast poultry processors in Belfast were dumping chicken guts into the ocean, raw chicken guts. He did a lot of environmental things. In the early '70s he worked with Howard Trotsky to put an end to the log drives in Maine. He started, you know, brought some of the first environmental lawsuits on behalf of the federal government,

before Muskie's work on the Clean Water - Clean Air acts really took hold. And he used the 19B, 1898 -

DN: All rivers harbors acts?

JM: Yeah, yeah, he went after a lot of companies on that basis. He took on DeCoster for wage and hour and trucking violations. He took on, you know, some big wigs, big people, the railroad companies. And as a result, in part I think, Bill Cohen kind of hel-, he never got reappointed his last term; he was a holdover for four years, so. And he always kind of figured that was because of some of the people he went after. So family politics was, continues to be an influence.

DN: Well, when you look at your own issues and your own career and your political decisions, they're not so far from your father's after all.

JM: In a way. It might have been the same things he would have done in my shoes, as a member of either party. I mean, Republicans don't have a corner on conservatism and Democrats don't have a corner on liberalism. You look at the abortion issue in the Maine legislature, some of the most prominent supporters of Right to Choose, the view I hold, have been Republicans. David Huber, John McKernan, I'm trying to think of Republicans in the state senate who were very much in support of the right to choose position. Whereas Democrats like Charlie Pray, John Martin, originally Joe Brennan who changed, came around, were all the other way, Right to Life, so to speak. So on women's issues, certainly, and a lot of other issues, there's been line crossing over the years.

I also worked on Pam [P] Plumb's campaign when I was in law school, no, when I was in the attorney general's office. I was living in Portland around '76, '78, when she first, she was the first woman mayor of Portland, and I thought that was great. And she was a neighbor of mine, so I worked on her campaign. And I think that's when I first met Jerry Conley, Sr. and Jr., because they had, they got involved in that. Seventy-eight, who else's campaign did I work on? I don't know. Then I got to run myself in 1980, and Brennan quite frankly, very reluctantly appointed me to that job. And he offered me a judgeship, he offered me a worker's comp position, and I said, "Joe, I don't look good in black and I hate medicine, why would I want to do worker's comp?" Now I'm doing worker's comp cases, among other things. So he just did everything to try to get me to back off and I said, "I really want that job."

And, so I was appointed in May, May 23rd and I had to run for it, in special caucus in August. And two guys in that office, I didn't even know where the office was, two guys, Scott Davis and Peter Dublin who had worked for Delahanty, Delahanty didn't want me to have that job. A woman DA? Never heard of before, I think I was one of the first in the nation, in the country. Janet Reno might have been in office maybe two years before that in Florida, and Elizabeth Holtzman in Brooklyn, New York had been in office maybe a year or so. So it was unheard of. New England had never seen a woman DA.

And I took over the office. I went to see everybody at their home so I'd get to know them, all the assistants. I had no idea who was even working there and, because Androscoggin County, they weren't real thrilled necessarily, but I paid a lot of personal visits and I got a lot of

Democrats behind me quickly. And because I'd been involved in campaign work, they knew about me if they didn't know me personally, so that was an advantage. And I had been involved in Kennedy's campaign earlier in 1980 statewide, so had gotten to know a lot of Democrats in Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford through that, and that helped. And so it was a Democratic caucus that nominated me eventually, and I, and we had a caucus election in August and I beat my opponent, then opponent, by almost three to one. I didn't have any opposition after that.

And I called Joe Brennan at the White, at the Blaine House that night because everybody he had nominated, everybody he had appointed to public office had bombed on the election at that point. He had appointed Norm Bureau as sheriff to replace Lionel Cote, whom I then indicted, and Norm had failed in his election bid. He'd appointed somebody else. Davis Rawson did a very funny column about how Brennan's appointees had failed. And I was the first to actually win election, so he was happy. And I called him up, and the guy who ran against me was still working for me, it was awkward. And he was, the guy who ran against me was peeved because I had taken off and gone to the national convention in July. And I was worried that I wouldn't be able to do my job and campaign back in Androscoggin county, where I needed the votes. Well it turned out, Nancy Grape was the *Lewiston-Sun* reporter. I called her every day from Lewiston, and I called the *Evening Journal* guy every day from, from New York City I mean. And I fed them stories twice a day. I got more press than God. I got more press by being out of town for that week. And the poor guy, the poor stiff that was working for me and running against me nights was out there campaigning and getting nowhere essentially. So I got credit for going to the convention essentially, when I thought I wouldn't. But, and I won in the caucus.

And I called Brennan at the Blaine House that night, "Hey," I said, "I won, hey, I won, here's the votes, here's the tally." And he said, "What are you going to do about Peter Dublin? What are you going to do with him?" My initial instincts was, I should get rid of him. He ran against me. How can we work together? He said, "Don't make a move." "What?" I mean, I got, of course I was high on being elected there and feeling great. He said, "Don't you do anything with Peter Dublin, don't do anything." And I said, "I don't want the son-of-a-gun working for me," da-da-da-da-, because he'd said some bad things about me. Well, welcome to campaign world, hello, we all say bad things about each other or take things personally sometimes. And he said, "Don't, you just sit on it for a week and don't say or do anything." So I took his advice, and I was seething and I was thinking, what am I going to do with this guy? I'll assign him to Livermore Falls district court for the rest of his life. And, but I sat on my temper and I didn't do anything about him or with him or say anything to him, just, you know, "How are you doing? How are you doing?" And a week later he finally came, arrived at the right decision himself.

And Brennan had said to me, he said, "How many votes did that guy get?" And I said, "I forget what it was, it was, there were about three hundred people there so he got eighty, ninety votes, maybe a hundred, I don't know," I said, "whatever it was." He says, "Well that's, say a hundred and two," he says "well, that's a hundred and two people you need to court over to your side." And he taught me something about winning: you don't write anybody off, you have to remember you represent all the people, not just the ones that voted for you. And whoever ran against you, they also have friends and allies and you don't burn any bridges. And sure enough, you know, some of the people who supported him, Barbara Trafton supported him. And the next day she called and wanted to have lunch. She said, "Now I want you on my team to help me," you know,

da-da-da-da-da. And we ended up working together on a lot of things. So, you don't burn bridges.

DN: Did you, you've mentioned several people who weren't particularly happy at the thought of a woman being a DA.

JM: Not many. There were no women judges other than Harriet Henry, and I don't think Jessie Gunther had been appointed at that point. Harriet had been appointed in 1973, I think, the first year I was in law school. Maybe Jessie was on the bench by then, but by 1980 still, you know, there was no woman on the Supreme Court, there were few if any on the superior court. I practiced with men, all my trials were against men, with men, in front of men. And I remember some male trial attorneys complaining that I wore skirts that were too short and the jury was being distracted and, that's when I had good legs. And I says, "Hey, the one advantage I have is a varied wardrobe compared to men, so might as well use it." And, no, it was, I was very nervous about it. I wanted that job, I figured I could do it and it was a big challenge and it was a leap, but I didn't have much of a support group going in at all. I was entering a new club.

And all the cops were men, and all the people I was telling what to do basically were men. And it was, some of them were a tough bunch, in Lewiston especially. I ended up prosecuting and, investigating and/or prosecuting dozens of white collar things and petty misdeeds in office by Lewiston-Auburn officials of various sorts. And there was a real club there that had to be broken open, and that took a while. It's a very, it's somewhat of a closed society.

But they'd had a woman mayor by that time. Lillian Caron had been mayor of Lewiston, and she befriended me, she was very sweet to me. We disagreed on a lot of issues, but she was a good, you know, became an ally. Georgette Berube was always nice to me, good to me. We campaigned together on a lot of things, on a lot of campaigns. Later Connie Cote. So there were women of different persuasions in the political scene there, in minority roles. But there were no women in my job and very few women in the court system really, unfortunately.

DN: That's another change that you've seen take place.

JM: Oh, sure.

DN: In about fifteen years.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

DN: That's right.

JM: Yeah, we have two women on the Maine Supreme [Judicial] Court now. Well, as of January we'll only have one on the superior court, my sister-in-law, Nancy Mills, who's married to Peter. His second wife is also a lawyer. His first wife was a lawyer. His second wife is a lawyer, and was a McKernan appointee to the district court, and McKernan appointee to the superior court, and doing an excellent job. But more women are involved in the court system obviously from all aspects. And there have been three other women DAs since I took office

originally, so it's not an unusual or earth shattering experience for the public to consume any more. Newsworthy at the time but.

And I found, in the first five years in office, I felt besieged by invitations to speak about domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault. And I finally stopped accepting those invites.

I said, "I want to talk about burglaries, robberies, white collar crimes, arson, manslaughter cases, drug offenses, I do all these other things too, you know. Just because I'm a woman it doesn't mean I have a corner on the market on domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse, you know, I don't have any special knowledge about those things." They're certainly priorities for all the DAs now. I had the feeling I was being singled out on those issues, by women's groups, too, as well as law enforcement generally.

DN: Well, thank you very much.

JM: Hey, thank you.

DN: You've given great perspective on social as well as political change.

JM: Well, I don't have nearly the amount of knowledge or expertise that you do, Don, on a lot of these issues, and a lot of these people. I'm afraid I didn't have a lot of personal contact with Senator Muskie, for instance, and I regret it; I wish I had. Fact is I was either too young or I was out of state during his major campaigns, and didn't come back to the state until '73, so, after the last big one.

DN: Thank you.

End of Interview